

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-20

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

INFO USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 140616

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: MASS

SUBJECT: FUNDING OF PROPOSED ENGINEER UNIT

1. DEPARTMENT AND DOD ARE HAVING DIFFICULTY IN PROVIDING THE 1.2 MILLION DOLLARS WHICH THE EMBASSY REQUESTED TO CREATE A VIABLE ENGINEER CONSTRUCTION PLATOON. ARA IS PREPARED TO SEEK AN ADDITIONAL 600,000 DOLLARS IN MAP (300,000 DOLLARS FOR FY 75 AND 300,000 DOLLARS FOR FY 76) IN ORDER TO INITIATE THE UNIT BUT THIS WOULD REQUIRE A REALLOCATION OF MAP FUNDS FROM OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY PROGRAMS. MOREOVER, THE AVAILABILITY OF ANY FUNDS FOR THE ENGINEER UNIT IN FY 77 IS UNCERTAIN.

2. IF THE DEPARTMENT AND DOD ARE ABLE TO ALLOCATE AN ADDITIONAL 600,000 DOLLARS IN MAP FUNDS TO PANAMA IN FY 75-76, THIS WOULD STILL BE ONLY ONE HALF OF THE FUNDS THE EMBASSY HAS INDICATED IS NECESSARY TO CREATE A VIABLE ENGINEER PLATOON. TO FUND THE UNIT, THEREFORE, THE REMAINING 600,000 DOLLARS SHORTFALL WOULD PRESUMABLY HAVE TO BE

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COVERED BY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVES: (A) DIVERTING FUNDS FROM THE REGULAR FY 75-76 PROGRAM FOR PANAMA, WHICH IS CURRENTLY RUNNING AT ABOUT 500,000 DOLLARS A YEAR, (B) RE-ALLOCATING AN ADDITIONAL 600,000 DOLLARS FROM OTHER LA COUNTRY MAP OR (C) SEEKING THE NECESSARY ADDITIONAL FUNDS

(900,000 DOLLARS) FROM CONGRESS IN FY 76. IN REGARD TO (B) AND (C), WE ALREADY FACE STRONG COMPETITION FOR FUNDS FOR OTHER COUNTRY PROGRAMS AND MUST ALSO CONSIDER CONTINUED CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURES TO REDUCE LATIN AMERICAN MAP ALLOCATIONS.

3. GIVEN THESE PROBABLE FUNDING CONSTRAINTS, REQUEST COUNTRY TEAM (A) REEXAMINE THE PRIORITY OF CREATING THE PROPOSED ENGINEER UNIT, PARTICULARLY ITS IMPORTANCE IN COMPARISON TO OTHER MAP PROGRAMS FOR PANAMA; (B) ASSESS THE POLITICAL AND PRACTICAL VALUE OF THIS UNIT RELATIVE TO THE NEGATIVE IMPACT IN PANAMA WHICH MIGHT RESULT SHOULD PROJECT NOT GO FORWARD AND (C) IF THE COUNTRY TEAM AND PANAMA ATTACH PRIORITY IMPORTANCE TO THIS UNIT, CONSIDER WHETHER THE NATIONAL GUARD ITSELF WOULD BE WILLING TO FUND THE ANTICIPATED 600,000 DOLLARS DEFICIT.

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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